

United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1621
12 April 1994

T U E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

- + Bosnian Serbs halt shelling of Gorazde after NATO air strikes on Sunday and Monday; Bosnian Government forces open fire on Serb positions without provocation, says UNPROFOR.
- + Special Representative for Rwanda unable to negotiate cease-fire between Government and RPF amid chaos in Kigali; parties promise to cooperate with UNAMIR evacuation of civilians.
- + Head of Special Mission to Afghanistan deplores outbreak of fighting in Kabul after ten-day cease-fire; says United Nations will persevere with efforts to bring about peace.
- + Secretary-General begins two-day visit to Germany after chairing ACC meeting in Geneva.
- + Security Council, in letter to Secretary-General, stresses need for agreement on implementation of confidence-building measures for Cyprus by end of April.
- + Special Envoy Vance to meet at Headquarters with delegations from former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece in effort to resolve differences between two countries
- + WHO reports no cases of poliomyelitis in 141 countries in 1993; seeks to eradicate disease worldwide by year 2000.

* * *

Bosnian Serb guns around the safe area of Gorazde were silent today, but Bosnian Government forces fired mortars against Serb positions "without provocation," according to a United Nations spokesman. On Sunday and Monday, at the request of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), aircraft belonging to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombed Bosnian Serb forces shelling the city.

(more)

Meanwhile, Bosnian Serb troops set up check-points around Sarajevo, impeding the movement of UNPROFOR personnel, the spokesman continued. They also mined three storage sites where weapons had been collected by UNPROFOR. At the same time, United Nations military observers were encountering difficulties throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, including restrictions on movement and problems with communications.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for the former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, today had a series of meetings in Sarajevo with a view to resolving the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He met with UNPROFOR Commanders, the Envoys of the Russian Federation and the United States, the Bosnian President and the NATO Commander in the region, and then departed for Zagreb.

* * *

Despite intensive efforts, Special Representative Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh has been unable to negotiate a cease-fire agreement between the Government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) because of the chaotic situation in Kigali. However, the two parties have promised the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) that they will cooperate with the final phase of the evacuation of civilians from the country, according to a United Nations spokesman. He noted that the Security Council was keeping the status and mandate of the Mission under close consideration.

Today, RPF forces attacking Kigali linked up with some 600 of their troops already in the city, and there were reports of random violence and looting. Meanwhile, 260 UNAMIR peace-keepers from Ghana were pinned down -- but not immediately endangered -- by RPF shelling of the city of Byumba, the spokesman said.

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs yesterday convened a meeting of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in Geneva to prepare contingency plans for a return to Rwanda. Relief agencies have been strengthening their capabilities in neighbouring countries so that they will be ready to respond when the situation there improves.

* * *

The head of the Secretary-General's Special Mission to Afghanistan, Mahmoud Mestiri, today deplored the resumption of fighting in Kabul after a ten-day cease fire. Addressing a rally of Afghan refugees in Peshawar, he said the tragic news would only give new urgency to United Nations efforts to bring peace.

The Special Mission has been in Peshawar for the past four days hearing the views of a wide range of Afghans on how the Organization can best aid national reconciliation and reconstruction. On Saturday, the Mission will begin its third visit to Afghanistan with meetings in Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat and Bamiyan.

(more)

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today concluded his visit to Geneva and departed for Bonn, where he was due to meet with the German Foreign Minister and the President of the Bundestag. The Secretary-General will be in Germany for two days, during which he will also meet with Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and will then pay a three-day visit to Spain.

Earlier today, the Secretary-General chaired the closing session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). During its two-day meeting, the Committee discussed the relationship between peace-keeping and emergency operations; the economic and social activities of the United Nations and the forthcoming Agenda for Development; follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED); and the issue of providing resources for development and "donor fatigue."

* * *

The Security Council has said it fully supports the Secretary-General's efforts to promote an agreement on implementation of a package of confidence-building measures for Cyprus. However, in a letter from its President to the Secretary-General dated 11 April, the Council expressed concern that not enough progress had been made on key issues, and stressed the need for the parties to reach an agreement by the end of the month.

The Council noted that the Greek Cypriot leader was ready to accept the ideas on implementation put forward on 21 March, if the Turkish Cypriot leader did likewise. It said the coming weeks would provide an important test of their commitment to making progress towards an overall settlement.

The package of confidence-building measures includes the reopening of the fenced area of Varosha and of Nicosia International Airport. In his reports to the Council dated 4 April, the Secretary-General stressed that the package and the ideas on implementation offered real benefits to both Cypriot parties.

* * *

Special Envoy Cyrus Vance will meet tomorrow at Headquarters with a delegation from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and on Thursday with a delegation from Greece, with a view to resolving the differences between the two countries, a United Nations spokesman announced today. In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 11 April, the President of the Security Council expressed support for efforts in that regard. He also expressed the hope that the two countries would cooperate fully with the Secretary-General and Mr. Vance.

(more)

* * *

A record 141 countries reported no cases of poliomyelitis last year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Less than 8,000 cases were registered in 46 other countries, down from almost 16,000 cases in 58 countries in 1992. Those figures were contained in the WHO's report on "Progress Towards the Global Elimination of Poliomyelitis," which was released on Friday.

In 1988, the World Health Assembly launched an initiative to eradicate the disease by the year 2000. Since 1991, the western hemisphere has reported no cases of paralytic poliomyelitis. Meanwhile, the disease was absent or occurred at very low levels in western and central Europe, north Africa, southern and eastern Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and the western Pacific. However, the eastern Mediterranean region reported a 24 per cent rise in polio cases last year.

"The WHO's initiative to eradicate poliomyelitis worldwide -- the first viral disease to be wiped out after smallpox -- is well under way," said Dr. Jong Wook Lee, Director of the Global Programme for Vaccines. The Organization had received strong support from the international community and the United Nations system, he added.

* * * * *